

The South Shore Atari Group *Newsletter*



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SSRG

Volume Two
Number Four
May 1989

\$1.00

SSAG Newsletter

THE SOUTH SHORE ATARI GROUP NEWSLETTER - VOLUME TWO, NUMBER FOUR

The Newsletter is a monthly publication of S.S.A.G., and is provided free of charge to our members. Our goal is to provide timely, accurate and useful information to the Atari community. Unless otherwise noted, permission is given to reproduce articles or columns provided that prominent credit is given to S.S.A.G. and the individual authors. We actively participate in newsletter exchange programs and will gladly trade copies of our newsletter for newsletters from other Atari users groups on an issue-by-issue basis.

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The Newsletter is produced using **Timeworks Desktop Publisher ST** on Atari ST computers and the Atari SLM804 Laser Printer. Opinions expressed herein are those of the individual authors.

S.S.A.G. holds its **general meetings** on the third Friday of each month, from 7-9PM at the Computer Cache store in Quincy. (See map on rear cover.) Membership dues fee is \$10.00 per year, which covers admission to all meetings, voting privileges, newsletter subscription and member prices on PD software. For newcomers, the first meeting is free.

S.S.A.G. **Steering Committee meetings** are held on the first Friday of each month, 7-9PM at Computer Cache. Membership in the committee is voluntary and open to any S.S.A.G. member. The committee seeks input from members concerning all aspects of the users group, and welcomes any interested members to attend.

S.S.A.G.

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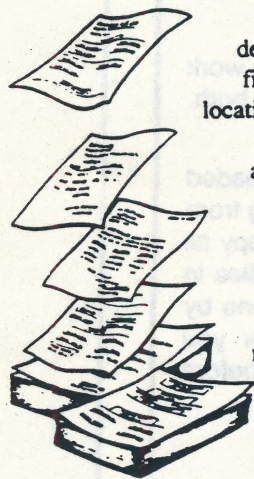
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All the power of dBASE III+ and more for your Atari ST!!

dBMAN V, in a package of three separate functions: Database Management, Report Printing, and Program Development, is the only database management program which has all the power, flexibility, and capacity that you'll ever need!

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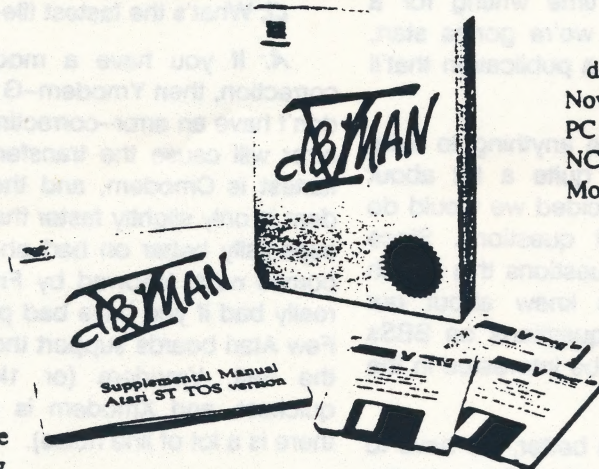
complex business reports such as inventory count sheets, packing lists, employee payroll reports and customer billing statements are easily created.

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personal finances. For your office, customize a complete accounting system to fit your business needs.

Also available for *dBMAN V* is the high performance Greased Lightning compiler. This compiler fully supports macros, and executes dBASE programs up to 16 times faster than dBASE III Plus.

dBMAN is also available on Novell Netware, IBM PCNET, PC DOS, SCO Xenix, UNIX on NCR Tower, NEC ASTRA XL, Motorola 8000, Altos, Microport 286 and 386, Apple Macintosh, and Commodore Amiga.



dBMAN V's features:

- ✓ dBASE II and dBASE III Plus compatibility
- ✓ Easy-to-use, pull-down menu interface to create, add, edit, and report database information
- ✓ 320 programmable commands and functions
- ✓ Password protection and data security at field level
- ✓ Easily transport your dBASE III data files and programs between Atari ST and PC's
- ✓ Extensive data validation including range checking
- ✓ Single command menus: vertical, horizontal, scrollable and pull down menus
- ✓ User defined pop-up windows
- ✓ Create a GEM pull down menu, mouse menu and file selector
- ✓ Run GEM application from *dBMAN*
- ✓ Program debugger/editor. And more...

Report Writer features:

- ✓ 9 group levels
- ✓ Up to 255 columns and 255 lines per page
- ✓ Page headers, page footers, group headers, group footers, titles, summaries, and body lines
- ✓ Print labels up to 99 across
- ✓ Conditional printing of any items
- ✓ Compute running sums, counts, averages, minimums and maximums
- ✓ Relate and report from up to 9 database files with lookup (one to one) and scan (one to many) relations. And more...

Specifications:

- ✓ Field types: Character, Numeric, Date, Logical, Memo
- ✓ Maximum characters per field: 254
- ✓ Maximum number of records per database: 2 billion
- ✓ Maximum number of index files: no limit
- ✓ Maximum record size: 4000 bytes
- ✓ Numeric precision: 17 digits

System Requirements:

- ✓ Atari 520, 1040, or MEGA ST with one floppy-drive and 480K free RAM.



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Key 'N Steve's Excellent Column

?



Well, this is our first time writing for a magazine, but we figured if we're gonna start, we should at least start with a publication that'll accept us!

Since neither of us have anything to write about, and we both know quite a bit about computers in general, we decided we would do a column answering YOUR questions. Since nobody has asked us any questions this month (probably because no one knew about our column?), we found some questions on BBSs and thought someone might be interested in the answers...

If we're gonna help you better, we have to know your questions. You can ask us at the SSAG meetings, or you can leave messages to Kevin Furbish or Steve Griffis on any of the BBSs listed on page two of this newsletter. We'll try and answer your questions, and then put them in the next newsletter for everyone to benefit from.

Q: I have a Mega 4 computer, and an ICD FA-ST Hard Drive that is set to auto-boot from drive C:. When I hold down the Shift, Control, and Alternate keys the hard drive continues to auto-boot. How do I stop this?

A: On the 1040 or 520ST's that will work just fine, but Atari changed that on us Mega owners. To stop auto-booting, wait for the busy light on drive A: to come on, and THEN press Shift, Control, and Alternate keys.

Q: My hard drive, a Seagate ST-225, sometimes doesn't want to initialize. When I turn

it on and it comes up to speed, it beeps at me once and nothing happens. When the hard drive works it beeps twice. Is it the drive, or what?

A: We see several possibilities: The beeps are caused by the Seagate's self test mode - one beep means an error with the hard drive or communicating with the controller, two beeps means everything is A-OK. If the drive is new, we would say it is not a problem with the drive, but if it's old then that could be the problem. Check the cables between the hard drive and the controller, and make sure the connections aren't too loose. If the drive is fine, and so are the cables, then the only thing likely to be causing the problem is the controller.

Q: What's the fastest file-transfer protocol?

A: If you have a modem that has error correction, then Ymodem-G is the fastest. If you don't have an error-correcting modem, then one error will cause the transfer to abort. The next fastest is Cmodem, and then Zmodem (Cmodem is only slightly faster than Zmodem, but it is especially better on bad phone lines). SEA-link comes next, followed by Fmodem (Fmodem is really bad if you have bad phone lines, though). Few Atari boards support those protocols, so for the rest, Ymodem (or 1k Xmodem) is the quickest, and Xmodem is the slowest (unless there is a lot of line noise).

Q: I can't get STart's ReSTART utility to work with Universal Item Selector 2! I love them both, so is there a way to use them both?

A: Yup, but ReSTART MUST be loaded before UIS2. If you have them both running from the Auto folder here's what ya gotta do: Copy all the files out of the Auto folder, erase the files in the Auto folder, and then move the files, one by one back to the Auto folder in the order you want them to be run (i.e. copy ReSTART before you copy UIS2).

Q: What is an .IMG file?

A: .IMG (Image) files use a GEM VDI bit image format. The best thing about them is that you can create a picture or object that is larger than the ST's screen, and then display/print it on a device with better resolution (Laser printer,

plotter, etc.). Image files are popular with scanners, desktop publishing, and some drawing programs (especially Migraph's).

Q: I've heard Atari is going to sell a PC Emulator for the ST, where can I get it?

A: You can't. According to Atari, they have no plans for an IBM Emulator. Avante Guard produces *pc-ditto*, a software IBM emulator, and they are working on a hardware emulator that will run IBM software at 4.77Mhz.

Q: I have a Mega 2 and 1 of the drives likes to stay on while the hard disk is booting (it's a Supra 30)...and it varies between A: and B: for some unknown reason. Is there any reason why the drives stay in an accessed mode even when boot control has been shifted to the C: partition?

A: We don't know why the drive A: and B: would alternate, we've always seen them both go on at the same time. Drive A: becomes busy when the boot sector is attempted to be run. Drive B: comes on to see if you have one or two drives on line.

Q: Whenever I access drive A:, B: likes to keep spinning, even though its drive light is off and theoretically should not be accessing...is this just a weird quirk or am I crazy?

A: No (to both of your questions). When either drive A: or B: is accessed both drive motors spin. The reason for this is in case you are doing something like a copy from A: to B: then the motor of drive B: is already up to speed when it is supposed to write the data, and then drive A: is up to speed when it is time to read data again.

Q: My disk drive in my Mega 2 will no longer read any non standard formatted disk or any copy protected games which are most of them. Does my disk drive need to be realigned, replaced, or what?

A: Since it is a Mega drive, and therefore relatively new, we would suggest cleaning the heads, and if that doesn't work try getting it tested or the heads realigned.

Q: I bought a 520 ST-FM about 3 months ago. The computer I bought only has a single sided drive in it. About one month later Atari released the 520 ST-FMs with double sided

drives in them! Is there any way I can get an upgrade to a double sided drive?

A: Atari says they won't do it, but if you take it to your dealer he will probably install a DS drive for you.

Q: I have a bad desk accessory installed on my hard drive and it keeps causing the computer to reboot. How do I rename the accessory if I can't access the drive?

A: Stop your hard drive from auto-booting (see question above), and then load the hard drive boot program (if you have an ICD, then it is called ICDBOOT.PRG). You now have access to the hard drive! You will have to install the drive icons on desktop though.

Q: Can I use an ESDI hard drive with my ST?

A: Yes, and it's not as hard as most people think. You can hook it up just like a regular SCSI hard drive, except you will need a new controller like Adaptec's 4250 (a SCSI to ESDI controller). The next thing you need is a formatting program that supports the 4250. There is a ARC file on many PD boards (it originated at The Mall (508)481-5324) that has a data file for ICD's format program for the Adaptec 4250.

Kevin Furbish & Steve Griffis

WE NEED FEEDBACK!

The S.S.A.G. Newsletter is intended to help *YOU*, the Atari user. We endeavor to present timely, accurate and important information. Many of our authors have expressed the hope that readers will find their pieces useful. If there's anything you'd like to see in the Newsletter, especially in one of our regular columns, please write or leave electronic mail to either one of our Co-Publishers, our columnists, or the author of any of our feature articles. You'll be helping everyone!

Piracy Strikes Again!

Spectrum HoloByte CEO Speaks Out

Submitted by Dana P. Jacobson

The following story is a "Letter to the Editor" from Spectrum HoloByte CEO/Chairman Gilman G. Louie. The letter originally appears in the April 1989 issue of Current Notes magazine. The letter is reproduced here, word for word, with permission granted by Current Notes. Our thanks to the people at Current Notes for allowing the SSAG Newsletter the opportunity to keep our readers informed of the problems of piracy, and how it affects the legitimate ST user.

Dear Editor,

When the Atari ST first came out, many of us thought that the Atari would become the best-selling personal computer. Just as the Commodore C64 when it first came out, the Atari ST represented state of the art technology at a cost that everybody could afford. Programmers naturally gravitated towards the ST because of its low cost and high performance. But the Atari ST has suffered from both a lack of software and poor market positioning. Its fate has been much the same as that of the Atari 400/800 (which was light-years ahead of the C64 in many ways): a great machine with little or no support. Those who bought Atari STs were quickly forced to band together through networks and user groups. Talking to Atari users, we learned many wanted to see our best-selling air combat simulator, *FALCON*, converted to the Atari ST. They also wanted us to take full advantage of the machine's capability, rather than doing just a simple conversion job from the Macintosh or IBM in the way that many other titles have been converted. Many of our competitors warned us that releasing an ST product would be a money loser. We were told that within weeks the product would be up on the bulletin boards and sales would fall to zero. We chose to disregard these comments and felt that a majority of Atari

ST users really wanted new products and that the piracy problem only existed with a small handful of users. Many of us did not even want to put copy protection on the product because we feel that copy protection is inconvenient and a nuisance for the honest user. Copy protection is also expensive, adding about \$0.50 per copy to our cost of production. However, within thirty days of releasing *FALCON* ST, pirates had put the product up on the bulletin boards - complete with diagrams for the code wheel protection, keyboard layout and mission maps of the product. *****The real cost of such software piracy is not the lost \$49.95 sale, but rather the lost industry support for Atari ST.***** Whether the machine format is an IBM, Amiga, C64, Apple II or Macintosh, piracy will always exist. A good software company accepts this fact and hopes that there are enough users out there who do not pirate to cover the cost of developing and publishing a product and allow for a reasonable profit. Many ST owners argue that the ST has no more pirates than IBM or Mac. Many of us at **Spectrum HoloByte** believe this to be true. The problem is that the number of installed ST's is considerably smaller than that of the IBM or Macintosh, thus increasing the impact of piracy on sales. In addition, ST pirates seem better organized and piracy seems more accepted (or, should I say, tolerated) by ST users. The cost of developing a product is quite high, especially on a complex machine like the ST. *FALCON* ST was converted and enhanced by a third party developer. A third party developer lives by the royalties earned on each product sold. Typically, a third party company receives around \$2 in royalties for each copy sold. **Rowan Software**, the company that converted *FALCON*, spent over \$40,000, and 24 man-months on the Atari ST version. The Amiga

version already has double the sales volume of the ST, even though Amiga *FALCON* has been on the market for only 6 weeks while ST *FALCON* has been released for 9 weeks. When Macintosh and IBM versions were released, they sold four times the volume of product over the same period of time. Based on the current sales trend, the ST developer will be lucky to break even. A good-selling Amiga or Macintosh product will sell 20,000-40,000 copies in its first year. An IBM title will sell 40,000-100,000 copies, yet a top ST product would be lucky to sell more than 15,000. It will be very difficult to convince this development company to do another ST conversion when it could make triple the dollars programming in Amiga, IBM, or Macintosh product. For publishers, it's also very costly to produce and market games. When development, marketing, advertising and production are included, it costs anywhere between \$250,000 and \$500,000 to introduce a new product. After retailers and distributors take their share of the purchase price, the publisher receives in the range of \$12 to \$20 per each copy sold to cover its cost and profits. In addition, publishers must support their products with new updates and offer telephone and network support for users. There is no clear-cut solution to the problem of piracy. All we can ask is that if you like a program, buy it. Think of it as an investment. The more invested, the more and better titles you'll see for the ST. Help us send a message to the rest of the industry that there really is an ST market willing to buy good software. **Spectrum HoloByte** will continue to monitor the ST market and keep a close eye on what happens with *FALCON* ST. It's a shame that a few users can hurt a market as badly as the ST pirates can and deprive thousands of good ST users of the product support that other machines receive.

Sincerely,

Gilman G. Louie, CEO/Chairman

SPHERE, INC.

Spectrum HoloByte

CALL FOR ARTICLES!

S.S.A.G. Newsletter needs articles on all aspects of Atari computer usage. Of particular interest are entertainment software reviews, explanation of programming techniques, and applications discussions. If you'd like to write for S.S.A.G. News, please consider the following guidelines:

Text files should be in 1ST Word, Word Perfect, or pure ASCII formats. Picture files should be in DEGAS, Neochrome, or Easy Draw .GEM or .IMG formats. If you do not wish your material to be redistributed among other Atari newsletters, please indicate this when submitting the material.

Submissions may be made by U.S. Mail or send to any of the electronic bulletin boards listed inside the back cover. If you send a disk through the mail, please use single-sided formatting and copy the files twice. Hard copy should be included whenever possible. All disks will be returned. All contributors receive one copy of the appropriate issue of S.S.A.G. News free.

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ONE
RINGY
DINGY

Telecommunications
Column
By
Patricia Manzo



pleased to announce our new membership programs available for all current and new *PC Pursuit* customers.

- o Regular Membership – Includes up to 30 hours of non-prime time usage for \$30 per month.

- o Family Membership – Includes up to 60 hours of non-prime time usage for \$50 per month. Immediate members of a family may use the same ID.

- o Handicapped Membership – Includes up to 90 hours of non-prime time usage for \$30 per month. Information regarding membership qualification will be posted on the *Net Exchange Bulletin Board* by May 1.

All non-prime time usage hours over the membership minimums will be billed at \$3.00 per hour. Any prime time hours (day-time usage) will be billed at \$10.50 per hour. The fixed monthly membership minimum will be billed in arrears, therefore charges for July usage will not appear on your credit card until August or later, depending on your credit card billing cycle.

We have made several improvements in our billing system in support of the new membership program. Calls of one minute or less duration will not be billed. In addition, all calls will have one minute subtracted to off-set call set up time.

Telenet will begin implementing the new membership program in a matter of weeks. During April you will receive a new *P.C. Pursuit* ID and password. Your existing ID will be canceled on May 1, 1989. Beginning June 1st you may call our Telemarketing representatives at 1-800/835-3638 to sign up for the membership program of your choice. To assist you in choosing the appropriate program, starting in June, we will furnish call detail information to all customers with more than 30 hours of usage. There will be no additional registration fees for existing customers. You may change your membership program at any time.

These new membership programs will go into effect July 1, 1989. Unless you specify otherwise, we will register you for a regular membership at that time.

We apologize for the delay in notifying you of the new price change announcement and realize that it was to have been posted in February; however, we have spent the last month reviewing all of your comments and obtaining senior management's approval of the changes that are included in the letter below. As a result of the delay on our part, we have changed the effective date of the price change to July 1, 1989. The following letter supersedes any and all previous letters and messages regarding the *PC Pursuit* price change. You will receive a copy of this letter and a new set of terms and conditions in the mail. Please direct any questions you may have regarding this letter to Product Management in the Prod area of this BBS.

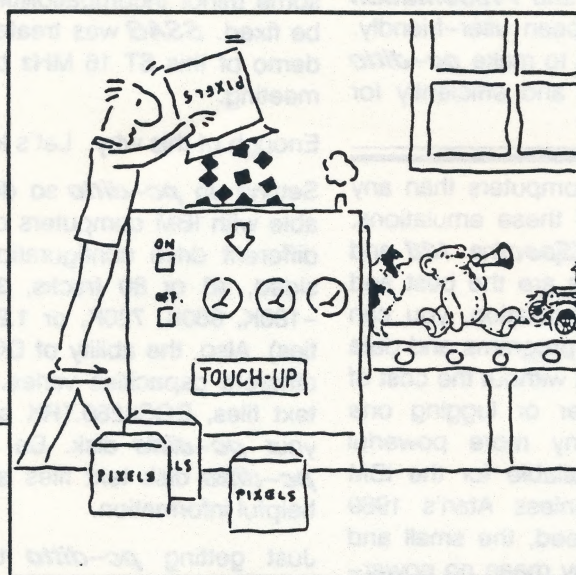
March 29, 1989

Dear *PC Pursuit* Customer:

The price change announcement made several months ago elicited a number of thoughtful comments and suggestions from our customers. In consideration of these, **Telenet** has restructured the *PC Pursuit* offerings. We are

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ST PC >> BIG BLUE BYTES

by Chet Freeman

This column will be a regular feature of the **SSAG** newsletter. In it, I will discuss how to use **pc-ditto**, and **Microsoft(MS)/IBM** Disk Operating Systems (DOS) and programs – particularly public domain or shareware. Until the recent introduction of IBM DOS 4.0 and **Presentation Manager**, the IBM has not been user-friendly. This column will explore ways to make **pc-ditto** work more easily, effectively and efficiently for you.

The ST can emulate more computers than any other personal computer. Of these emulations, the Macintosh **Magic Sac/Spectre 128** and the IBM **pc-ditto** emulations are the best and most useful. With the IBM emulation, you can work at home with the same programs and data used in many businesses, but without the cost of purchasing another computer or lugging one home. Also, there are many more powerful public domain programs available for the IBM than for the ST. Finally, unless Atari's 1989 U.S.A. marketing plans succeed, the small and slowly growing ST market may mean no powerful, new software for the ST, just like the 8-bit.

Do you really need to buy an IBM (or compatible) or can **pc-ditto** do the job? The current version of **pc-ditto** runs at about 40% of the speed of an IBM PC/XT (8086/8088 chip) which is much slower than an AT (80286 chip) which in turn is much slower than the newer PS/2 (80386 chip). So, forget playing arcade games (but who would want to anyway? – ST games are better.) The simple and obvious answer is: if you can afford another computer, do it. If not, **pc-ditto** at \$89.95 full retail, plus the cost of MS DOS (preferably version 3.2 or later), is a cheap way to run many IBM programs. As for the speed problem, **pc-ditto II** (available April 1989) is advertised to run at turbo XT speed – 3 times

faster than the original PC/XT, but it will be much more expensive (\$300) as it is a hardware/software combination. This is still slower (and a lot cheaper) than an AT, but this speed would be fast enough for games and serious home use. Another solution may be Jim Allen's **Turbo 16** if some minor incompatibilities with **pc-ditto** can be fixed. **SSAG** was treated to the first working demo of this ST 16 MHz board at our February meeting.

Enough of this why. Let's look at how.

Setting up **pc-ditto** so disks are interchangeable with IBM computers can be difficult due to different drive configurations (single or double sided, 40 or 80 tracks, 3.5 or 5.25 inch size –180K, 360K, 720K, or 1.2 or 1.4 meg capacities). Also, the ability of DOS versions to handle different capacities varies. Be sure to read the text files, DOS3280.TRK and DOS3380.TRK, on your **pc-ditto** disk. Be sure to read all the **pc-ditto** disk text files as they contain much helpful information.

Just getting **pc-ditto** to run can also be difficult. MS or IBM DOS (preferably version 3.2) is needed as well as **pc-ditto**. DOS is not sold on single sided 3.5" disks, nor can ST drives read 1.2 or 1.4 meg 3.5" disks. Older (not recommended, but cheaper) DOS versions come on 5.25" floppies. Your dealer should be able to copy your DOS onto a disk that matches your ST drives.

The following procedures will help optimize and configure **pc-ditto** for 1 or 2 drive systems without a hard drive. We will create a disk to "quickstart" **pc-ditto**. This disk will contain both DOS and **pc-ditto**, eliminating a lot of disk swapping and clicking to startup.

First, make a back-up copy of your **pc-ditto** disk (and DOS disk if you have a copying

program for protected disks. The ST can read DOS disks and files without any problems. But the IBM - and the ST when emulating an IBM - cannot read an ST disk or file unless the boot sectors contain special information not normally found on an ST disk or transferrable by normal ST disk or file copying.)

Using the copy, run PC_MENU.PRG in the STPROGRA folder to configure *pc-ditto* for your system following the instructions on screen and in the manual to set the monitor and drive type(s), etc. Set the "A" Drive for your DOS disk compatible drive because that's where the computer looks for DOS to start IBM emulation. If you have a hard drive, definitely read the disk text file HARDDISK.DOC before selecting the option for a hard drive or you can trash your hard drive.

For 2 double-sided 80 track drives (either 5.25 or 3.5") using a wordprocessor in ASCII mode, create the following file named CONFIG.SYS for the DOS version shown:

IBM DOS 3.2 only.

or MS DOS 3.2

(or higher)

IBM DOS 3.3

BUFFERS=40

BUFFERS=40

FILES=50

FILES=50

DRIVPARM=/D:0/F:2

**DEVICE=DRIVER.SYS /D:
0/F:2**

DRIVPARM=/D:1/F:2

**DEVICE=DRIVER.SYS /D:
1/F:2**

For other drive combinations, read DOS3280.TRK or DOS3380.TRK for the codes that follow DRIVPARM or DEVICE. There must be a space after DRIVER.SYS and before the / which follows. The DRIVPARM command is documented only in MS DOS manuals, but it works with IBM DOS 3.2 only. DOS versions below 3.2 do not contain drivers for 3.5" drives, so you must use DEVICE=PC_DDRVR.SYS and ASSIGN new drive letters - consult your *pc-ditto* and DOS manuals for details. (If ASSIGN is used, some DOS commands, such as BACKUP, RESTORE, JOIN, LABEL, SUBST, or PRINT, can't be used.)

Using GEM, rename the CONFIG.SYS file, if any, on your DOS disk to CONFIG.TMP and copy the

new CONFIG.SYS file to it.

Run PC_DITTO.PRG to start *pc-ditto* and insert the DOS disk when requested.

Next, write protect your DOS disk (just to be safe), re-insert it, and type FORMAT A:/S and hit <RETURN>. Unlike the ST, the DOS formatting program is an external command and must load from a disk file before a disk can be formatted. At the screen prompt, remove the DOS disk and insert a blank disk, and hit <RETURN> (same key as <ENTER>).

Exit to GEM by tapping the <DELETE> key while holding down <CONTROL> and <ALTERNATE> and then hitting <ESC>. The following files should show in GEM on the newly formatted disk: COMMAND.COM, IBMDOS.COM and IBM-BIO.COM. The last two files are hidden files when running *pc-ditto* or DOS.

Using GEM, copy files from your *pc-ditto* and DOS disks to this one creating subdirectories as needed:

***MAIN (ROOT)
DIRECTORY***

***STPROGRA
SUBDIRECTORY***

IBMBIO.COM

PC_D.1

IBMDOS.COM

PC_D.2

COMMAND.COM

PC_DITTO.PRG

CONFIG.SYS

PCDCON.FIG

SPEEDY3.EXE

DOS

QWICKKEYS.COM

SUBDIRECTORY

PCDSETTD.COM

FORMAT.COM

PC_DDRVR.SYS (if needed)

ASSIGN.COM (if needed)

PC_DMOUS.COM (if needed)

PC_DHD.SYS (if needed)

DRIVER.SYS (if needed)

(All of these files should fit on a single sided disk.)

Finally, open up the STPROGRA subdirectory and save the desktop. Now you can "quickstart" *pc-ditto* by simply clicking on PC_DITTO.PRG and hitting <RETURN> at the prompt for the DOS disk.

That does it. Next month's column: AUTO-EXEC.BAT and other batch files. See you then!

PLAYING BY THE NUMBERS

by Gerry Strathmann

It's six o'clock on a Friday night, early in February. Cold grips the Northeast and salt-speckled slush coats the sidewalks. The skiers have fled for the northern peaks and downtown Boston rests a few hours, awaiting the onrush of yuppies and their weekly bacchanal. A winter's death shrouds the world, all life cocooned. Yet, in the urban canyons of the financial district there is a single spark - a warm amber glow radiating from a second floor window. Moving closer to this sign of life reveals a ghastly sight: papers, numbers, magazines, a few books, more numbers, a computer and printer (churning out more papers with more numbers) and a bleary-eyed man in a suit, tie undone and sleeves rolled back to the elbows. The clues point to taxes and money, a high-pressure project with a Friday deadline. Is this guy's job on the line? Is he in the middle of a hostile takeover? No, he's a Rotisserian!

A WHAT!?! Well, let's take a moment and talk about baseball. America's Game, right? That may be so, but baseball is BORING. If you are lucky, you get a second of action for every minute of the game. A close game in most sports builds anticipation, and the best games are decided in overtime. But in baseball, does anyone ever want to see extra innings? I dread them! So what attracts so many people to baseball? The answer is "Numbers."

Every time a batter steps to the plate, and every time a pitcher warms up in the bullpen, numbers flash on the screen to show the fans exactly who these guys are. Announcers make the most of delays with statistics like:

"Wade Boggs bats .438 with bases loaded and a full count in game-winning situations."

"Bob Welch is 16 and 3 when Ron Hassey catches, 3 and 5 when he doesn't."

"Twice the average number of homers are hit in Fenway Park during humid day games with the wind blowing from the east."

Where do they get this stuff? Somebody (probably a whole room full of somebodies) sits around entering all sorts of baseball numbers into a computer just so announcers can spit out bits of statistical trivia for any given situation. Yet baseball, while not quite as boring as candlepin bowling, becomes almost tolerable at this minute level. But this isn't enough. I know, because I tried to become a fan. I wanted to love America's Game, root for America's Team and collect America's Baseball Cards. Somehow, the numbers were not enough. They were cold, impersonal and meaningless. I gave up. Eventually, I identified the problem: I was not involved. However, this realization did nothing to enhance the game. Unless I learned to hit major league pitching there was little I could do about it.

Why the diatribe on this symbol of freedom? Simply this - baseball is exciting compared to computers. Pick up a DOS manual, stare at a programming printout, listen to buzzwords and try to look interested. Believe me, it's not worth the effort. Kinda makes you want to watch a baseball game. So what do computers and baseball have in common? Numbers, once again. And a group of high-powered business execs (who somehow also happened to like baseball) went to lunch one day and created the perfect combination - Rotisserie League Baseball.

Briefly, Rotisserie League Baseball (RLB) is a

fantasy game in which a dozen people become owners of hand-picked baseball teams. On the first Sunday after Opening Day, the owners gather to bid on players and put together a complete 23-member baseball team (the Draft). Aside from having to fulfill various position requirements (five outfielders, nine pitchers, two catchers, etc.), each team has just \$260 to spend in the auction. That means getting Jose Canseco for \$42 forces a team to pick up Greg Stone, Billy Jo Robidoux and Ron Karkovice for a buck each (don't worry if you've never heard of them). During the season you can replace injured players with undrafted ones, trade with other owners, claim minor leaguers who rise to the big time and try to get rid of bum pitchers and .167 hitters. And as the season progresses and the real-life players accumulate statistics, the fantasy teams are ranked according to their players' numbers in eight categories. At the end of the season, the top teams get the money. Now that's a reason to watch baseball! The numbers have become personal, a reflection of your judgment. You groan when Pete Incaviglia strikes out five times in a row, wince when Dave Rhigetti gives up a three-run homer in the bottom of the ninth, and cheer when Rickey Henderson steals four bases in one game.

But success does not come easily, and putting together a winning team starts with scouting. And scouting gets us back to numbers. ALL the numbers of ALL the players for ALL the years they have been playing. That's typically over 6000 numbers. While there are plenty of books that have all these numbers, how do you compare a .300 hitter who steals 40 bases and hits 40 homers with a pitcher who wins 25 games and has a 2.30 ERA? With a computer, of course!

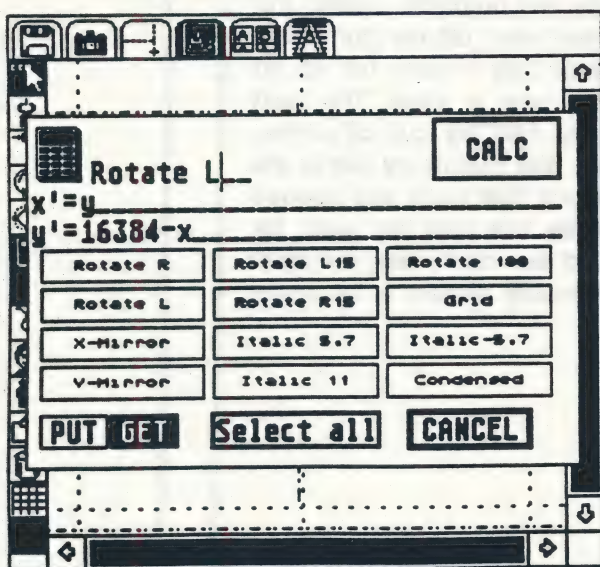
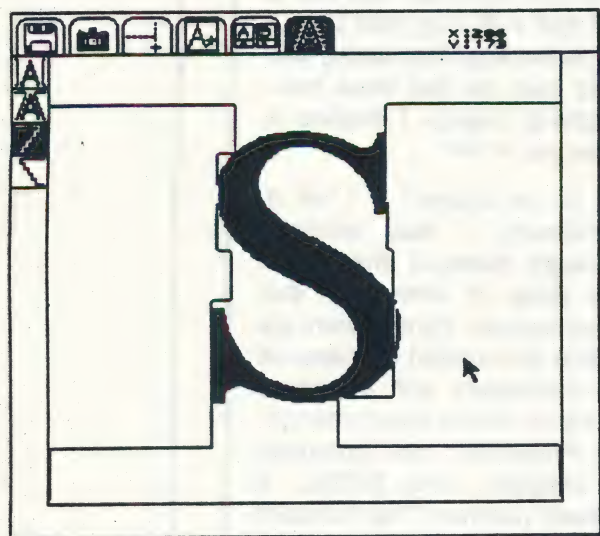
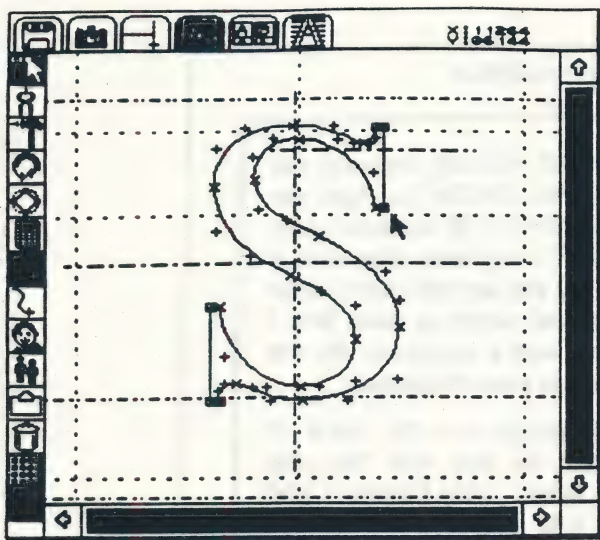
In 1986, my first RLB season, I was the only owner who had a computer. In early April of that year I dutifully plugged in all the numbers of most of the players from the previous season, ranked the players by position and woke up with great confidence on Draft Day. I used a simple database program (PC-FILE III) on an IBM PCjr. The computer had a single disk drive and 128k RAM. I finished in fifth place.

The next season I started earlier, for I had

learned the advantages of not only knowing the good players from the bad, but the bad from the awful. I was still using PC-FILE III, but now I was on an IBM-XT with a 10 meg hard drive and a whopping 640k RAM. By the end of March I was ready. I had two seasons' worth of stats and I was still the only owner with a computer. By the end of the season I was in seventh place.

The 1987 season taught me the value of minor league statistics, for that was the year Mike Greenwell, Ellis Burks, Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire made it to the majors. In 1988, I started my scouting in late February. By this time I had graduated to an AST Premium 286 with a full megabyte of RAM and a 40 meg hard drive. I still led the league in technology, and along with the knowledge gained over the last three seasons I felt I had a fighting chance. I finished in ninth, only three places out of last.

1989 was going to be different - I felt it. Starting in early February, I read advance scouting reports, bought baseball magazines and listened for any scrap of information that might lead me to a contender. Winter evenings were spent in my office surrounded by baseball registers, yellowed newspapers and countless printouts. And while my hardware didn't change, I was now using PARADOX, an extremely powerful database program, and EXCEL, a tremendous spreadsheet program. The numbers were all in there, cross-referenced and juxtaposed half a dozen ways. Two days before the draft I printed out my last numbers, closed the binder full of stats and shut off my computer. The night before Draft Day I went out to an expensive dinner and saw a show. The next morning I got up early, had my cup of coffee, packed up the binders and caught my ride to the draft. As the owners took their seats and opened their notebooks I knew this was my year, for when I glanced around the room I saw row upon row of numbers, all neatly printed - by computers.



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A Review by NORMan Boucher

ORBITER is a complicated and interesting program. If you decide to buy it, be prepared to use the manual, because you will most definitely need it.

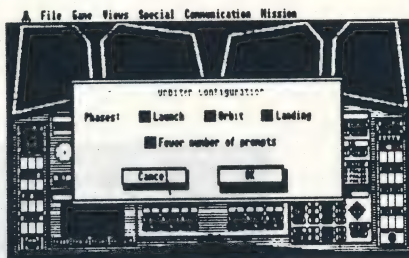
This is NOT a game. It is a Space Shuttle Simulation. If you like "shoot-em ups," then this is not for you. If, on the other hand, you like the challenge of doing something and doing it right, this program may be your "cup of tea."

First, let's touch on the manual. It happens to be the Mac version. As you read it, you'll see that installing **ORBITER** on your hard drive is possible, forget it. That's the Mac version only. A separate sheet of paper tells you to back up the second disk and use that during play (the first disk is copy-protected). This paper further tells us that if you don't have a color monitor, you will have to spend another \$12.50 to get the

it's not; as there are a lot of commands that must be given to the Orbiter and they must be done in a timely fashion or you die, just as in real life. The training mission is easy, but things do get harder as you change your options. You can tell the program to give you fewer prompts; this in itself makes the game harder to complete alive. You may also choose to just launch your shuttle, have it already in orbit, just work on landing the shuttle, or any combination of the three.

While playing, you may save the game at any point, I highly recommend this.

This simulation does not give you stunning graphics, as does another Spectrum HoloByte simulation you might have heard of, **FALCON**; but it is not the same type of game. There are no enemy space stations to shoot down,



monochrome version. To me, this seems to be a rip-off. If there are two versions out, both should be marketed, and the user with the monochrome system should not be penalized for not owning a color monitor.

Once you have made your back-up you are ready to go pick up your manual and follow the training mission walk-through. This will get you launched. Once in orbit, you will complete your mission and return to Earth. It seems easy, but



although there are weapons on board (we are told they will be used in future updates and mission disks). You can see outside your Orbiter, but the view is limited. When you DO see the earth or a satellite, the graphics are done well.

CONCLUSION: If you are a shoot-em-up type person, forget **ORBITER**. If you like to do something that will leave you with a sense of accomplishment, this program is for you.

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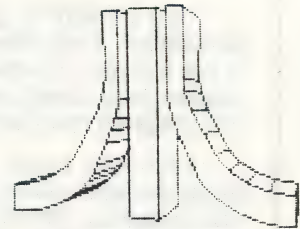
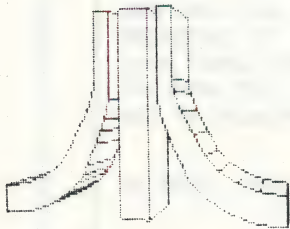
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WARSHIP, A Thinking Gamer's "Battleship"

by Gerry Strathmann

WARSHIP, a World War II ship combat simulator by **Strategic Simulations, Inc. (SSI)**, is a realistic and complex game of that old favorite, "*Battleship*." Upon entering the game, you choose which side to play (Japanese or Allied), the year in which the encounter takes place (which determines the ships that are available), the time of day and visibility, and whether you wish to fight a large or small battle. You also set the duration of the battle (one to four hours), the ability of each side to repair damage and the type of scenario to play (a straightforward encounter, a bombardment or a convoy). There are also provisions for air cover, although there are no airplanes in the game (more on that later). You can have your battle on the open sea, in Savo Sound, or in an area that you create. Furthermore, you can choose from over seventy ship classes, each with its own characteristics, or you can let the computer handle this task for you. You can even modify ship characteristics to create "super" battleships or rusted barnacle barges. Amazingly, due to the easy-to-follow menus and the excellent interface, determining all the above factors takes about 90 seconds. After you have decided who, what and where, it's time to weigh anchor.

A screen of royal blue glows before you. A handful of bean-sized ships, your navy, are all lined up in a neat row. Some are smaller than others, so those must be destroyers. Pretty disappointing? Well, yes, especially for a game on the ST. This is not a graphics-intensive game. As a matter of fact, those are the only graphics in the game! No explosions, no billowing clouds of black smoke, no splashes as the shells miss. Indeed, at this scale the torpedoes are merely pixels moving slowly across the screen. Admittedly, the top view of the ships looks like a top view of ships -from about ten

thousand feet. Allied ships are grey with blue details and Japanese ships are gray with amber details. The sound effects are equally minimal, with a dull roar signifying a miss and a loud roar indicating a hit. But believe it or not, **THIS DOESN'T MATTER!** Just as gaudy chess pieces do nothing to enhance the game, vibrant graphics and complex sound effects could only detract from this simulation. *WARSHIP* takes skill and concentration to win, or even to lose gracefully.

The game's strongest points are its attention to detail and its ability to involve the player in the game. *WARSHIP* excels in creating tension and gives one the feeling of command. You begin the game with no knowledge of the enemy's ships, and you wait breathlessly until you get that first sighting. Will he come out with the prized battleship Yamato, along with a few destroyers? Or will it be half a dozen armored cruisers and some fast destroyer escorts, each carrying a dozen torpedoes? When the shells start flying and the gunners zero in on your ships, you wonder, "Will that one hit?" And when it does, there is just enough of a pause to allow your stomach to churn as you mutter, "Please don't wipe out a turret..."

And as the enemy destroyers make their almost suicidal torpedo run at your main battle line, you chew your nails wondering, "Did they launch their fish? Should I turn away now, or do I have time for one more salvo?" A mistake in timing can decide the day. At the same time you wait patiently as the passing minutes bring your destroyers closer to the enemy. And as each shell buries itself in their thin hulls you wonder, "Do I launch the torpedoes now and save my destroyers, or should I press on for a sure shot, sacrificing the fast and fragile attack boats?"

Your heart sinks as you realize your mistake: one minute too long and three fish gut the battleship Iowa, one more jams the rudder of the cruiser Cleveland, and yet another (fortunately a dud) bounces off the Boston. You launch all your destroyers' torpedoes and do an about face. They rush to the aid of the foundering battleships, spreading smoke behind them to foil the enemy's aim. As your battle lines turn to the east, one of the "Mighty I's" 16-inch shells pierces the Nagato's deck and explodes a magazine. The Japanese turn as well, forsaking the sinking Nagato. Your hastily fired torpedoes pass through the enemy formation without effect, and both sides decide it is time to limp home and fight another day.

The creator of *WARSHIP* made a tremendous effort to include all aspects of ship-to-ship combat in the Pacific during World War II. The details range from counting the number of shells fired from each gun on every ship to differentiating shells by size, range and caliber. The calculations to determine if a shell hits, and the damage that results, take into account range, the relative positioning of the firing and target ships, the speed of both....and the list goes on. The formulae for torpedoes, a ship's turning radius, the chance of spotting an enemy vessel, and all the rest of the seaborne possibilities are similarly complex (and explained in great detail throughout the manual). Ship damage is just as detailed, with fires and flooding, electrical power loss and jamming rudders. Individual turrets can be knocked out, torpedo mounts lost, and ammunition stores destroyed. Fortunately, these efforts at realism are invisible to the player. The game, on its surface, is simple to play, and the ships are easy to direct. Commands are given in two forms: by ship and by division.

Ship mode is simply that - giving orders to one ship at a time. Division mode allows you to give orders to a "lead" ship and have the remaining ships in that division follow. Typically, three to five ships comprise a division, but like almost everything else in this game, that can be changed. You can reassign ships to different divisions, assign them to their own unique division, or combine every one in the same division. At first it would appear that these two

command modes are mutually exclusive. However, to skillfully wield your forces you must learn how to mix individual ship orders with those of the general fleet. I constantly switch between the modes, issuing commands to launch a sinking destroyer's last torpedoes, move a flooded ship out of the battle line, and target specific enemy vessels, all the while maneuvering my divisions into firing position.

Needless to say, one's involvement in the game can be complete. The ease at which the game incorporates so many factors is incredible. The resulting game is a joy to play, but there remains the feeling that it should have been capable of more. Surprisingly lacking are airplanes. Airpower is an abstract factor called "Control of the Air," which determines how important it is to win a particular scenario. If your side controls the skies, your forces can take heavier losses and still win the day. While *WARSHIP* is almost a direct conversion from the 8-bit version, this enhancement would have been a significant and welcome addition. During the conversion, the damage displays for each ship could have been enhanced by the use of graphs instead of numbers. An "overview" map of the entire area could have easily been added, and it would save the somewhat cumbersome scrolling necessary to locate all the ships. A "campaign" aspect would also be interesting, linking battles and allowing the repair of damage between encounters.

WARSHIP is an excellent simulation of surface combat during the Second World War. Those gamers who are naval warfare aficionados should take out that magic plastic and get their copies today. Its combination of realism and playability is matched only by the "paper-and-pencil" naval games I've played on gymnasium floors, and those took hours just to set up! An entire game of *WARSHIP* can be played in under an hour, but you will always find yourself tempted for just one more game.

WARSHIP, while not copy-protected, does require you to reboot your computer after each game. It retails for \$59.95. Any questions or comments can be left at the Harbour Light or Toad Hall BBS's.

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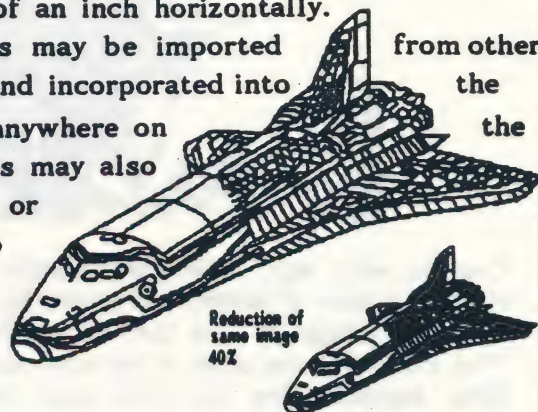
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Review By
Dana P. Jacobson

Over 50 years ago, J.R.R. Tolkien wrote "The Hobbit," a book of fantasy and adventure. Then came the trilogy of "The Lord of the Rings." "The Hobbit" is the story of the adventures of Bilbo Baggins. One day, the great Wizard, Gandalf the Grey, and thirteen dwarves arrived at Bilbo's door. With them, Bilbo set out on a great adventure, a quest of great treasure - the dwarf-hoards of the Kings under the Mountain. The quest was successful, and the last of the great Dragons, Smaug, who guarded the treasure, was slain. Now, these deeds of renown would probably not have concerned later history, if not for an "accident" along the way. Bilbo, while lost in the black orc-mines deep under the Misty Mountains, happened to find a ring while

groping along the tunnels. Later, Bilbo recounted how he came to find the ring, but Gandalf continued to be extremely curious about it. Many years have passed. Bilbo has left his home in the Shire, leaving his nephew, Frodo, the ring and all his other possessions. Gandalf has returned to the Shire, to Hobbiton, where Frodo resides at Bag End. It is here that we learn what Gandalf has suspected. Bilbo's ring, now Frodo's, was the One Ring. Sauron, the Dark Lord, had it forged in the Cracks of Doom to rule over the other Rings of Power. The history of the Ring is much too long to relate here. Suffice to say, it was now Frodo's task to destroy the One Ring lest Sauron regain it, and his power over all of Middle Earth! For many Tolkien fans, "The Hobbit" and the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy are more than just books. As the desire to learn more of Middle Earth grew, Tolkien, and later his son, wrote more about its history. Others have brought Middle Earth to life. Ralph Bakshi did two animated films; and there have been many books of illustrations and drawings. Now, we're rapidly approaching the 90's. Computers and programmers know no boundaries. Melbourne House has just released "War in Middle Earth." For Tolkien fans and computer enthusiasts, this is a must. The object of this game, in case you know nothing of Hobbits and such, is to destroy the Ring. The game begins in the Shire. Frodo, Sam, and Pippin have just received word that

Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.



Sauron's Ringwraiths (the Nine Nazgul) are inquiring about hobbits in order to regain the Ring and return it to Sauron, in Mordor. Frodo and company must leave the Shire quickly, as the Nazgul are closeby! Before we go any further, if you haven't read the manual - do so! Not only will you gain some insight of the story, but it is very well written. Gameplay is described extremely well, and there are a few tips. The writers interwove the story and gameplay very well. There are three levels of play: Full map level - this shows you the entire map of Middle Earth. "Forces" are shown as "dots;" good in blue, evil in red, and neutral in green. The Campaign level: this is a detailed map of parts of Middle Earth. You can scroll the map up and down, or left and right, by moving the pointer to the appropriate edge. Characters are depicted as figures, and armies as badges. All commands are given on this level. Animation level: this is a detailed view of any chosen area. On this level, each individual or monster is shown as a fully animated figure moving across a digitized background. On this level, you can have a specified character use an item in his possession, direct actions in combat, or engage in conversation. Experiment with all three levels, as each has its uses. I found that I played most of the game while on the campaign level. Every aspect of the game can be controlled by using the pointer - the picture of the pointing blue hand. By moving

the pointer over any of the icons at the top right corner of the screen; or clicking on an individual, group, or place on the campaign level will cause a window to open which will offer you a group of options or identify characters or places. The manual describes the functions of each icon well, so I recommend that you read it and experiment. Before I go any further, understanding the basic options is important. You must know how to change levels, use the icons, and plan a strategy. In order to make any headway in the game, you must continually give orders to the characters and armies that are available to you. You can select characters or armies and their destinations. It is usually beneficial to move some of your smaller forces to areas that consist of forces that are large or well defended. You must be on the Campaign level to give your armies orders. While your armies and characters are moving from one place to another there is a chance of your meeting other characters or armies. Some will continue past, while others will stop and talk. When you meet, a window will appear giving you options to stop and meet, or continue on. I always stopped to talk because I was afraid if I didn't, I may have missed gaining some important information. You'll also be given a choice to join forces or continue on your way. Obviously, all characters or armies that you encounter will not be friendly. If you meet an

Dear Frodo,

Bad news has reached me here. I must go off, I will return as soon as I can. Leave at once for Rivendell. There I hope we may meet again. You may meet a friend of mine on the Road: a Man, by some called Strider. He will help you.

Yours in haste
GANDALF.

PS. The servants of the Enemy are abroad and have taken the guise of riders in black. Avoid them at all cost!

enemy character or army, you will be forced to fight. When you are confronted with enemies, a window appears, listing all the forces involved in the battle. These are broken down by "major" characters/leaders, and numbers/types of armies following them. You then have four options for each to perform: charge, engage, withdraw, or retreat. You can control each group's actions by clicking on the appropriate box. The battle will continue until ALL the forces on one side are dead, or have retreated. A word of advice: I've never seen the enemy retreat although the manual claims it could happen. If you win the battle, your forces will continue on their way, but probably smaller due to casualties. If you lose the battle, these characters/armies are gone forever, along with their possessions. If any of your defeated characters possesses the Ring, the enemy will take it. If you fail to intercept this enemy force and win back the Ring, you've lost the game. You can also lose the game if Sauron's forces appear to have control of Middle Earth, even though you think you're doing well. I discovered this once or twice by giving up too many of my major strongholds. To win this game, the Ringbearer must get the Ring to Mt. Doom. There is NO other way. The manual describes many possible strategies, but I chose my own. It is worthwhile to check them out however, as you may decide to try one. I found the game very appealing because I am a big Tolkien fan. Not only did I enjoy playing the game, but this is the first game that I've played AND enjoyed reading the manual from cover to

cover! Not only does it explain things exceptionally well, but it also gives you a lot of background to the story. The graphics are very well done, but my only complaint in this regard was that the characters weren't "individualized." All 'like' characters and forces were identical. By that I mean that all elves were identical, all dwarves, hobbits, orcs, etc looked like each other exactly. You can't tell Frodo from Sam, Gandalf from Radagast, etc. This doesn't detract from the game, but I was hoping for more. The only other part of the game that disappointed me was something that the manual doesn't warn you about. At random times throughout the game, you will suddenly find a small window opening. In it reads something to the effect that the Valar (wise men) wish to see if you are worthy to continue your quest. Huh?!? If I wasn't worthy, why were my followers chosen to undertake this mission? Anyway, what you are being asked in this roundabout fashion, is to identify the map coordinates of a randomly selected place in Middle Earth. Oh yeah, included with this game is a full-scale folding map of Middle Earth. Most of the time you can determine the two coordinates with little problem, but if you have to locate a place that is not clearly defined with coordinates (some places fall between two sets of coordinates!) and guess wrong - the game is over! Other than those, I thoroughly enjoyed "War in Middle Earth." You don't have to be a Tolkien fan to enjoy it, but if you are, this game is a must!! --Frodo Lives!--

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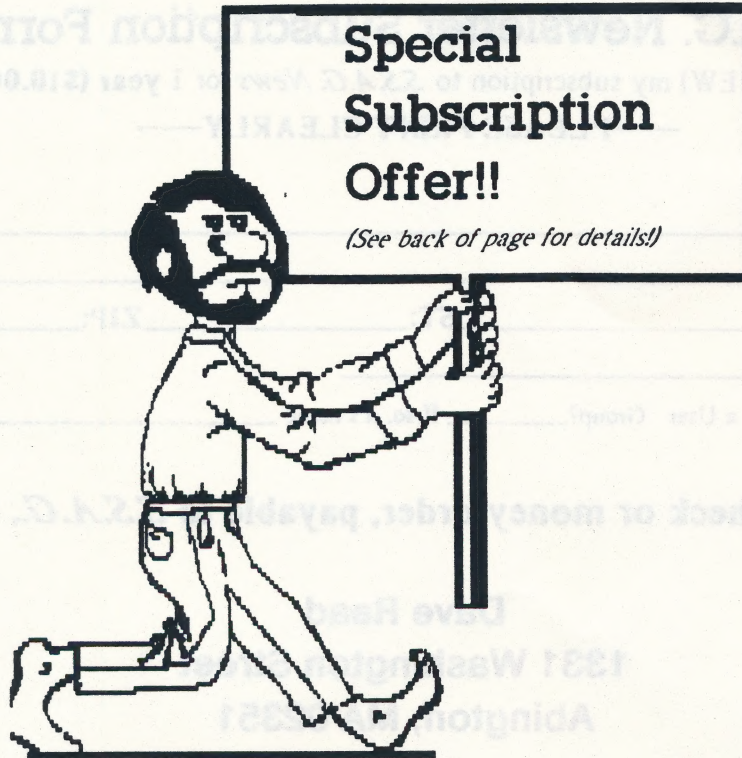
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Minutes from the April meeting:

The meeting was called to order at about 7:15. Gerry Strathmann announced that certain memberships were about to, or have expired; and that prompt renewal would allow a member not to miss any of the group's benefits. A few questions arose and then the main focus of the meeting began. Brian White, an animations enthusiast, had the group's full attention with his CAD3D demonstration. Brian currently writes the "Cyber Corner" column for the S.S.A.G. Newsletter, and briefly reminded the group to re-read some of the past columns to learn about many of the available animations software. Brian then showed quite a few samples of his work that he had videotaped. The video was an interesting concept, and Brian arranged it in a step-by-step demonstration. Later in the presentation, he showed us a portion of a current project that was extraordinary. He promised to bring back the final animation ASAP! After the presentation, members presented some of their own animations, and some of the ones that they have collected. The official meeting ended, the group broke up into small discussion groups.

Submitted by Dana Jacobson

S.S.A.G. Steering Committee Report, April 7, 1989:

As usual, the Steering Committee met on April 7 at Computer Cache. In attendance were Dave Anderson, Norman Boucher, Kevin Champagne, Chet Freeman, Dana Jacobson, Richard Maddox, Mitchell Myers and Gerry Strathmann. Conspicuous by his absence was Dave Read, who is vacationing at a nuclear test site somewhere in New Mexico. Can't wait to see that tan, Dave!

Leading off the discussion were topics for future general meetings. R/C Aerochopper and other entertainment software was confirmed for April, Spectre 128 (or GCR, if available), along with Ultrascript, was scheduled for May and pc-ditto II ("The Revenge") was lined up for June. In an effort to maintain the members' interest during the dog days of summer, a desktop publishing series was planned in which members will help create an anniversary issue to be published this fall (specifics to be announced at the general meeting). The possibilities of a MIDI demonstration and a visit by a company representative were also brought up and tabled for future consideration.

The issue of membership fees was raised and the following changes were approved:

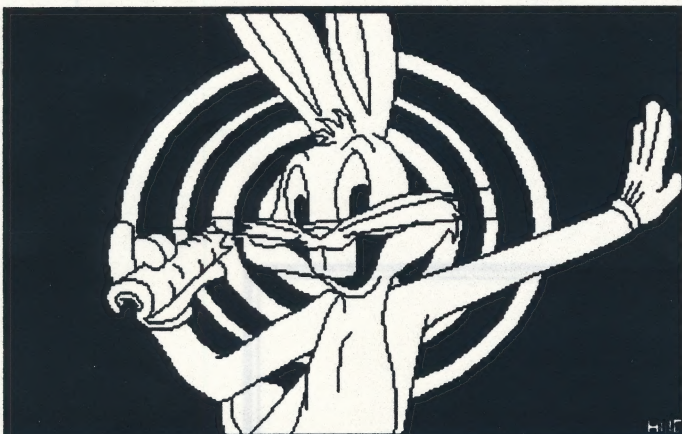
1. A family membership is now available for persons of the same family residing in the same household. The membership rate is \$18.00 per family per year. Renewals are \$15.00. 2. Individual memberships are now \$12.00, while renewals are \$10.00. 3. Only one newsletter is included per membership. 4. To take advantage of the lower renewal rate, membership must be renewed before it expires.

Mitch Myers volunteered to assemble the hardware needed to hook up a second monitor for demonstrations at general meetings. This should be up-and-running at the April gathering, and hopefully this will allow even those of us in the cheap seats to see what's going on.

Chet Freeman agreed to distribute copies of the newsletter to local computer stores for resale. The issue of a post office box for an "official" SSAG address was raised. Several Steering Committee members will look into making these arrangements and report back at the May meeting.

Finally, Mitchell Myers brought forth some 8-bit software he had acquired awhile back. The discussion evolved into the possibility of donating 8-bit software and hardware that members no longer use. Beneficiaries could include schools and libraries. While nothing was resolved on this topic, it is a positive idea that many Steering Committee members liked. Further discussions will be held next month.

As always, the Steering Committee welcomes any S.S.A.G. members to attend our meetings on the first Friday of each month. If you are interested in helping determine the direction, structure and activities of the group, joining the Steering Committee is the best way to do it!

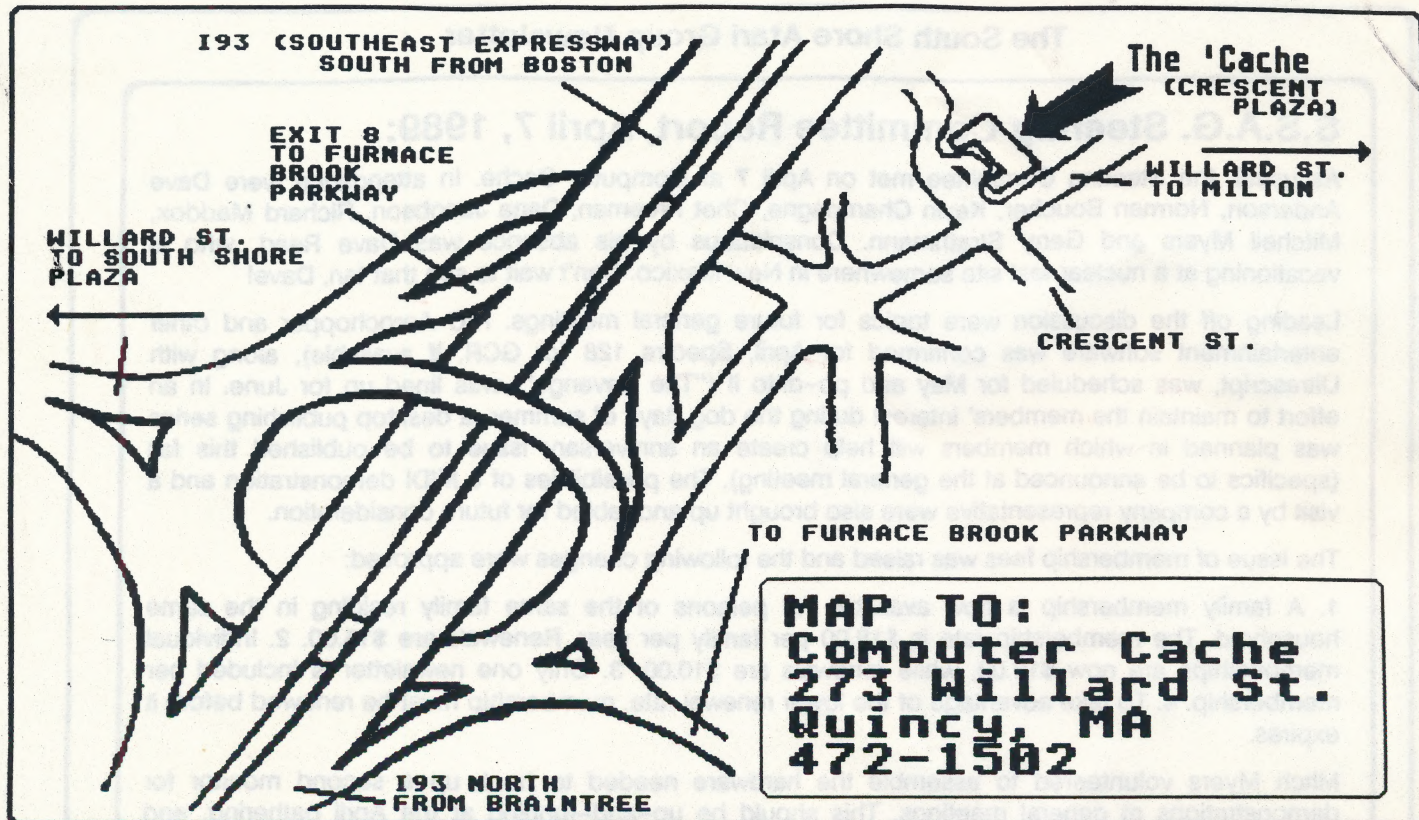


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